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IN THE APPLICATION

OF

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FOR A

CRIB SAFETY SHEET/BLANKET

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CRIB SAFETY SHEET/BLANKET

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Utility Application Serial No. 10/115,896 filed on April 5, 2002, which claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/356,773, filed February 15, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to sheets and blankets for an infant's crib or bed, and more particularly to an infant sheet and blanket combination adapted to secure an infant in a crib or bed.

2. DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

There are a variety of infant blankets and coverings for infants present in the art. In the past many designs functioned only to keep an infant warm while sleeping. Today much more is known about infant sleeping patterns and sleeping safety. The concern for infant warmth is now shared with the concern for infant comfort and safety. Some infants frequently change positions while

sleeping, so it is desirable to make an infant's sleeping environment as free as possible of suffocation hazards while at the same time insuring the infant is kept in a secure sleeping position.

5 An additional consideration in infant bedding design is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in which an apparently healthy infant will expire in a crib for no apparent reason. While the causes of SIDS still remain somewhat a mystery it is thought that sleeping in the prone position may increase the likelihood of SIDS. A device 10 to maintain an infant in the supine position while sleeping is therefore desirable.

U.S. Pat. No. 2,677,834 is typical of the earlier designs. The '834 patent discloses a crib blanket which is secured to the side of a crib with snap together fasteners. The blanket also 15 contains a single strap along the blanket's upper margin for securing an infant to the blanket. This invention will keep a blanket secure in its relation to the crib but, unlike the present invention, uses only a single strap to secure the infant under the blanket. Further, the blanket is not attached to the crib sheet.

20 Other designs such as U.S. Pat. Nos. 3,845,513 and 4,202,052 disclose fitted garments which are sewn to crib sheets to restrict the movements of infants. The '513 patent shows a sleeping bag blanket secured to a bedlinen sheet, the baby being secured in the sleeping bag by a diaper retainer with button down flaps and by a pull down zipper. The '052 patent shows a sheet with a central 25 pleat having an opening defined therein to which a jacket may be

attached, the jacket being secured around the infant by what appear to be button or snap fasteners. No blanket is shown. Infants must be manipulated to be secured in these garment-type inventions, which often wakes the infant as he or she is being put to bed, a
5 highly undesirable side effect.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,301,729 discloses one bedding device designed to prevent SIDS. It is a pocket like blanket device which secures an infant between one edge of the pocket and a mattress. This bedding device does not secure an infant in the same manner as the
10 present invention however, nor does it permit an infant to be positioned on its side without the risk of the infant moving into the prone position while sleeping. The '301 invention also does not prevent an infant from squirming downward into the blanket pocket which could cause a suffocation hazard.

15 Therefore, it is desirable to have an infant bedding product which will function to keep an infant covered and warm, is as free as possible of suffocation hazards, is easy to use, is adjustable and will prevent an infant from moving into the prone sleeping position while still permitting some infant movement.

20 None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to describe the instant invention as claimed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The crib safety sheet/blanket has a fitted sheet with a top surface, a bottom surface, and two opposing ends defining pockets

for snugly fitting the sheet to a mattress. One end of at least two elastic straps is sewn to one side of the sheet. Hook and loop fastening material is attached to one side of the free end of each strap. Mating strips of hook and loop fastening material are attached to the other flat edge of the fitted sheet such that it may mate with the hook and loop fastening material on the straps.

Attached to the center of the sheet is a rectangular blanket with a front surface and a back surface. The blanket is sewn along a longitudinal midline to the fitted sheet, defining two blanket halves which may be wrapped around an infant. Strips of hook and loop fastening material are attached to each half of the blanket so that the blanket may be fastened around the infant to retain the infant in a supine position while sleeping.

An infant may be placed on its back or side in the center of the blanket attached to the sheet. The edges of the blanket are folded over the infant with one edge lying on top of the other edge. The edges are removably attached to one another with mating pieces of hook and loop fastening material. When secured by the hook and loop fasteners, the blanket functions to completely encircle the infant from just under the infant's arm pits to well past the infant's toes. The blanket is fastened securely enough to insure that the infant cannot roll into the prone position, but not so securely so as to preclude all movement of the infant.

Accordingly, it is a principal object of the invention to provide an infant crib blanket/sheet combination which can secure an infant in one position while still permitting some movement.

It is another object of the invention to provide an infant crib blanket/sheet combination which is a one piece design which will reduce suffocation hazards.

5 It is a further object of the invention to provide an infant crib blanket/sheet combination which will sufficiently insulate a sleeping infant.

It is still another object of this invention to provide an infant crib blanket/sheet combination which will allow an infant to be secured for sleeping with a limited amount of disturbance.

10 It is an additional object of this invention to provide an infant crib blanket/sheet combination which will secure an infant and at the same time allow quick and easy repeated access to the infant for monitoring and/or medical treatment.

15 It is an object of the invention to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof in an apparatus for the purposes described which is inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

These and other objects of the present invention will become 20 readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a fragmented, environmental, perspective view of a crib safety sheet/blanket according to the present invention with an infant secured in the blanket.

Fig. 2 is a top view of a crib safety sheet/blanket positioned around a mattress.

Fig. 3 is a bottom view of a crib safety sheet/blanket positioned around a mattress.

5 Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the bottom of a mattress equipped with an infant safety sheet/blanket.

Fig. 5 is a top view of a second embodiment of the safety sheet/blanket positioned around a mattress.

10 Fig. 6 is a top environmental perspective view of a third embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 7 is a top view of the fourth embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 8 is an environmental perspective view of a fourth embodiment of the present invention.

15 Fig. 9 is a top environmental perspective of the fourth embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 10 is a bottom environmental perspective of the fourth embodiment of the present invention.

20 Fig. 11 is a top environmental perspective of a fifth embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 12 is a bottom environmental perspective of the fifth embodiment of the present invention.

Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The first embodiment of the present invention is an infant crib safety sheet/blanket 10 which, as seen in Fig. 1, is installed on a mattress in a crib, bassinet, or the like. The invention has a blanket portion 12 (blanket) with a front surface and a back surface. The blanket is attached to a fitted sheet portion 14. The blanket 12 is preferably sewn to the middle of the front surface of the fitted sheet 14 by stitching along the longitudinal midline of the blanket portion 12, defining two halves of the blanket which may be folded or wrapped about the infant. When in use, the blanket 12 is wrapped around an infant's torso and lower extremities (with one side overlapping the other side) so as to keep the infant warm and securely positioned in the center of the safety sheet/blanket 10 on its back or side. The blanket 12 is held in position around the infant with four mating strips of hook and loop fastening material (discussed below).

When secured in the safety sheet/blanket an infant retains full motion in its arms and head and some lateral motion but is unable to roll completely over or to extract itself from the blanket 12. By securing an infant in this manner there is a lower chance of sudden infant death syndrome, which is normally associated with infants sleeping in the prone position. The infant has no loose bedding materials upon which to suffocate, and the infant cannot kick free of its blanket and become cold during sleep.

Fig. 2 is a top view of the safety sheet/blanket wrapped around a mattress with the blanket 12 laid flat against the sheet 14 and the back surface of the blanket 12 coming into contact with the front surface of the sheet 14. The stitching 20, which secures the blanket 12 to the sheet 14, can be seen in this view. The hook and loop fastening material 16a, 16b sewn to the front surface of the blanket 12 removably attaches to corresponding hook and loop fastening material 18a, 18b sewn to the back surface of the blanket 12. Fig. 2 shows two sets of mating hook and loop fasteners (16a with 18a, and 16b with 18b) but additional fastener strips may be attached and used if a more secure hold is required. Fig. 2 also shows the three elastic straps 22a-22c that wrap under the mattress (discussed below) to secure the flat edges of fitted sheet 14 to the mattress 24.

The blanket as seen in Fig. 2 may be adapted for smaller infants by folding the sides of the blanket to reduce the blanket's overall width. Preferably, the right side of the blanket would be folded toward the front surface of the blanket and fastened with snap fasteners 13 present thereon. The left side of the blanket would preferably be folded toward the back surface of the blanket and secured with snap fasteners 15 present thereon.

Fig. 3 is a bottom view of a safety sheet/blanket 10 wrapped around a mattress 24. This view shows the two pockets 26a, 26b defined in the fitted sheet 14 which secure the fitted sheet to the foot and head portions of a mattress 24. An elastic band 28 functions to keep the two pockets 26a, 26b securely wrapped around

a mattress. Three elastic straps 22a, 22b, and 22c keep side edges of the fitted sheet 14 secured to the mattress. The sheet 14 may have several cloth reinforced grommets 23 dispersed along the sides of the sheet. These grommets 23 may serve as anchor points for bungee cords or other suitable holding devices when securing the crib sheet/blanket combination to the bed frame of a large bed so that the crib safety sheet/blanket 10 may be used when a crib is not available, e.g., when traveling.

Fig. 4 shows a perspective view of the bottom of safety sheet/blanket 10. The elastic straps 22a-22c are removably attached to one side of the fitted sheet 14, one strip of hook and loop fastening material 30a-30c for each strap 22a-22c being sewn to the fitted sheet 14 and a mating strip of hook and loop fastening material 32a-32c (seen in relief) being sewn to the elastic straps 22a-22c.

Fig. 5 shows a second embodiment 50 of the safety sheet/blanket that is used for infants who need additional physical support while sleeping. This embodiment and all following embodiments are similar to the first embodiment and the same reference numbers represent identical components.

The second embodiment of the safety blanket/sheet combination has a second blanket 40 with a top and bottom surface that is attached to the first blanket 12. The first blanket 12 is shown larger in this figure for illustration purposes. One horizontal line of stitching 42 holds together the tops of both blankets and four vertical lines of stitching 44a-44d hold together the edges

and the centers of the blankets. The four vertical lines of stitching 44a-44d also divide the blankets into three vertical sheaths 46a-46c. The bottoms of the sheaths 46a-46c may be closed using the snap fasteners 48 located on the bottom surface of the second blanket 40 and the top surface of the first blanket 12. Hook and loop fastening material, zippers, and any other fastening devices known to one skilled in the art may be substituted for the snap fasteners. Some of the hook and loop fastening material 16a, 16b has been moved in this embodiment to the top surface of the second blanket 40 from their position in the first embodiment on the top surface of the first blanket 12.

The second embodiment of the crib safety sheet/blanket combination is used in the same manner as the first embodiment except that supportive material such as egg-crate cushioning material or air pad-type material may be inserted into the sheaths 46a, 46b, 46c. Temperature regulating material such as hot and cold packs may also be inserted into the sheaths 46a, 46b, 46c. The supportive material is secured inside the sheaths by using the snap fasteners 48 located at the bottom of the sheaths.

The third, fourth and fifth embodiments of the crib safety sheet/blanket will now be described. These embodiments involve modifications to the fitted sheet. The third through fifth embodiments may employ either the blanket 12 described in the first embodiment of Figs. 1-4 or the double blanket 12, 40 design described in the second embodiment of Fig. 5. The following

description describes modifications to the sheet and their use with only the first blanket 12 for clarity.

A third embodiment 50 of the present invention, as shown in Fig. 6, replaces the fitted sheet of the first embodiment with a cloth sack 52 or case generally resembling an enlarged pillow case. The sack 52 has a top surface, bottom surface and one open end, the top surface being formed by a sheet as an integral part of the sack 52. Bedding material such as a basinet pad or a small mattress is ordinarily inserted into the sack 52 through the open end. The 10 blanket 12 is sewn to the top surface of the sack 52 in the same manner that the blanket 12 is attached to the fitted sheet 14. In all other respects the blanket 12 is identical to the first embodiment, and will not be described further.

A fourth embodiment 60 of the present invention is illustrated 15 in Fig. 7. This embodiment 60 substitutes a preferably rectangular sheet 62 of material in place of the fitted sheet 14 of the first embodiment. The sheet 62 has a front surface 64, back surface 66, a top edge, a bottom edge, a left edge 68 and a right edge 70. A fastening device such as hook and loop material 72 is disposed upon both the right 70 and left 68 edges. Snap fasteners or any other suitable fastening devices may also be used in place of the hook and loop material. The sheet 62 further has plurality of apertures 78 defined between its front 64 and back 66 surfaces. The apertures 78 are preferably located close to, and parallel to, the right 70 and left 68 edges. However, placement of the apertures 78 near the edges 68 and 70 of the sheet is not a critical aspect of

the invention, and the apertures 78 may be more centrally located as discussed below. As in the third embodiment, the blanket 12 is sewn to the front surface 64 in the same manner as the blanket 12 is attached to the fitted sheet 14, and is identical in all other respects to the blanket 12 of the first embodiment, and will not be described further.

5 The fourth embodiment 60 may be used as illustrated in Fig. 8 on a full size adult mattress. The sheet 62 is placed back surface 66 down on the top surface of a mattress. Adjustable straps 80 are 10 looped through the apertures 78 and through posts on the bed frame or an accessory guard rail in order to secure the sheet 62 to the mattress. It is well within the ability of one skilled in the art to design a wide range of suitable apertures 78 ranging from cloth reinforced slits to metal or plastic reinforced rings. It must be 15 noted, however, that any apertures containing hard or uncomfortable materials should be located more centrally on the sheet so as not to become uncomfortable to an infant when the invention is used on crib pads or bassinets as discussed below.

The fourth embodiment 60 may also be used on smaller bedding 20 materials, such as a crib mattress, as shown in Figs. 9 and 10. For these smaller applications the sheet 62 is wrapped completely around the mattress approximately midway between the head and foot of the mattress, with the back surface 66 of the sheet 62 coming into contact with the mattress. The left 68 and right edges 70 of the sheet are secured to one another using the aforementioned hook and loop material 72.

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The fourth embodiment may also be used on even smaller bedding material such as a bassinet pad. First, the left 68 and right 70 edges of the sheet are attached to one another as detailed above, but without the intervening mattress. The double thickness sheet 5 62 is then wrapped around a bassinet pad or the like. The sheet 62 is then secured in position by connecting fasteners 77 to fasteners 79.

A fifth embodiment 80 of the present invention, as illustrated in Figs. 11 and 12, uses the blanket 12 of the first embodiment but 10 substitutes a generally rectangular sheet 82 for the fitted sheet 14 of the aforementioned embodiment. The sheet 82 has a front surface, back surface, and two opposing ends. Disposed adjacent to each opposing edge are several sections of hook and loop material 84.

15 Several straps 88 have one end attached to the sheet 82 and are wrapped around beneath the mattress or crib frame, having a second end with corresponding sections of hook and loop material 86 which are releasably attachable to the aforementioned hook and loop material 84 on the sheet 82. Hook and loop material is the preferred method of strap attachment but any suitable method including but not limited to, buttons, snaps and buckles may also be used. The straps 88 themselves preferably have elastic properties, but any suitable strap may be used. Each of the straps 88 is attached to or threaded through a spacer 90. The spacer 90 is a flat, generally rectangular sheet which serves to hold the straps and keep the straps 88 properly positioned and oriented. In 20 25

use, the spacer will be disposed beneath the mattress. The fifth embodiment 80 also has two sets of corresponding fasteners 91, 92. Fasteners 91 are designed to attach to opposing fasteners 92 and in so doing reduce the overall size of the sheet 82 and thereby 5 prepare the apparatus for smaller size bedding materials.

It is well within the abilities of one skilled in the art to alter the shape and/or size of the fitted sheet and blanket to fit a variety of different infant sleeping devices such as cribs, bassinets, incubators and playpens. The sheet and the blanket may 10 be made from any suitable material, including cotton, wool, polyester, silk, lycra TM and nylon.

It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the sole embodiment described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.